



FireMed Ambulance Membership

A Program of
Eugene Fire & EMS
Springfield Fire & Life Safety
Lane Rural Fire/Rescue

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FIREMED MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN IN FINAL DAYS

The FireMed membership campaign officially closes on June 30, but FireMed staff will be available to accept applications online or over the phone until **Thursday, July 2**. FireMed membership is \$52 for an entire household and covers everyone for a full year. FireMed members also get a discount on their LifeFlight membership, paying only an additional \$35 for a membership that regularly costs \$65. For membership information or to join, go to FireMed.org or call 726-3636. Existing memberships expire on June 30 of each year. Those wishing to join or renew after June 30 can still do so, but will receive less than a year's service for their membership fee.

With ambulance fees at \$1600 plus mileage in Springfield, and the same rate taking effect in Eugene in July, area residents are rushing to FireMed, choosing to pay \$52 a year to cover their household rather than risk the big bill for an ambulance transport. New memberships are already the highest in this decade with final tallies yet to come. Also at a record level is the number of FireMed members who are choosing the FireMed Plus option that includes air ambulance membership through LifeFlight Network.

All of this membership flurry is happening against the backdrop of a funding crisis in ambulance service. Emergency medical service is funded entirely by user fees and memberships, with no tax revenue used to support the system. Decreases in federal reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid to less than the cost of providing the service has left local fire-department based ambulance services with huge funding gaps. Eugene and Springfield have instituted two 40% fee increases in about a year and a half, making an ambulance transport alarmingly expensive. FireMed, a program of the area fire departments has remained at \$52 per year throughout this time, making it a real bargain for local residents.

FireMed's mission is to make the excellent ambulance service in our area, on the ground and in the air, affordable to anyone. This year's ambulance rate increases make FireMed more necessary than ever. According to FireMed Director, Bart Noll, "If you are a FireMed member you can call 9-1-1 without hesitation. More lives are saved because people call the paramedics rather than try to make it to the hospital on their own. FireMed works."

FireMed Background:

FireMed is a program of the central Lane County ambulance providers: [Eugene Fire & EMS](#), [Springfield Fire & Life Safety](#), and [Lane Rural Fire/Rescue](#). Created in 1986, FireMed has made ambulance service affordable to everyone, decreasing the number of accident or illness victims who chose to drive themselves to hospital emergency rooms. Research at the time revealed that a large number of emergency department patients were not arriving by ambulance when that was the appropriate means of transport. The research identified two primary reasons people chose not to call an ambulance: they didn't recognize a medical emergency such as a heart attack or stroke, and they didn't think they could afford the bill that came with an ambulance ride. FireMed was created to address the cost concerns of residents. By purchasing a \$52 (ground ambulance) or \$87 (ground plus air ambulance) annual household membership, residents receive ambulance service at no out-of-pocket cost. Today there are 32,000 members in the local FireMed program, and another 150,000 in more than 85 other programs around the state. Membership in any of these Oregon programs offers membership benefits in all of the areas through a reciprocal agreement between the programs.

In 2008, FireMed partnered with [LifeFlight Network](#) to bring an air ambulance helicopter to the Eugene Airport. LifeFlight operates rotor-wing and fixed-wing aircraft from five bases in Eugene, the Portland area, southwest Washington and the Columbia River Gorge. LifeFlight also has reciprocal membership agreements with air ambulance providers in six western states.